

Worksession

Agenda Item #	8
Meeting Date	1/03/04
Prepared By	Catherine Waters, City Clerk/Treasurer
Approved By	Wayne Hobbs Deputy City Manager

Discussion Item	Council Meeting Minutes
Background	<p>The formal (written and adopted) minutes of the City Council are currently in a backlog for the 2004 calendar year—greatly due to transitions in staff responsibilities and competing priorities. Regardless, the City Clerk’s Office recognizes and certainly has an obligation to provide a record of the deliberations of the City Council as prescribed by the State’s Open Meetings Act (<i>Title 10, Subtitle 5, of the Annotated Code of Maryland, State Government Article</i>).</p> <p>In an effort to bring the record current, draft minutes for several months in arrears have been prepared and will be presented to the Council for “batch” consideration over the course of the next few weeks. Draft 2004 minutes are expected to be presented to the Council over the months of January and February. Staff has developed an approach for timely drafting/proposal of minutes as we enter the new year.</p> <p>Those who are familiar with the content of what has evolved to be “traditional” of the City’s minutes surely understand the detail of the textual content. It will be the recommendation of the City Clerk that the Council consider an “abbreviated” text – nothing short of compliance with the law or “Roberts Rules of Order” – which will facilitate a more timely turn-around of minutes.</p> <p>Supplements in the effort to provide immediate information regarding the Council’s discussions include live Cable Channel broadcasts and video tapes (available for purchase and/or check-out from the Library). Most recently, the Communications Office and Clerk’s Office have explored a web streaming technology which will enable a variety of meeting, agenda, document and discussion links. This is a move in the direction of evolving technology which lends to office efficiency; however, the City maintains and practices a mission to reach-out to our entire community, including those who do not choose to access public information via the Internet and/or e-mail.</p>
Policy	Legal compliance with State Open Meetings Act (<i>Title 10, Subtitle 5, of the Annotated Code of Maryland, State Government Article</i>).
Fiscal Impact	Varied - Staff time to attend and prepare draft/final minutes.
Attachments	Communications Manager, Lonni Moffet - “Granicus” software recommendation. Excerpt from “Open Meetings Compliance Board Manual” (pursuant to State Act – <i>Title 10, Subtitle 5, of the Annotated Code of Maryland, State Government Article</i>).
Recommendation	Discussion of topic. Consideration of new format and textual content of minutes.
Special Consideration	

Communications Manager, Lonni Moffet – “Granicus” Recommendation

Staff have been researching a solution for web streaming - and archiving - City TV onto the internet for several years. Until recently, most options have been extremely costly, or ponderous with too much staff time overhead. This past fall, staff reviewed an application offered by the Granicus company.

The Granicus family of applications includes 24/7 web streaming of the cable channel, and fully indexed archiving of Council meetings. Granicus's client base is primarily in California, and they have worked with staff teams representing cable, IT and Clerk's offices to create a fairly impressive, affordable product which meets operational needs of staff and accessibility needs of elected officials. It is staff's opinion that this product would address a variety of communication needs identified over time by staff and in the Council Goals process. Most notably to the current discussion is the ability to utilize the search engine included, type in a key word, which then brings up a listing of every archived agenda item pertaining to that keyword. Each link takes the viewer to that section of that Council meeting, which can be watched in its entirety, verbatim. The viewer may also follow along with "Annotated Minutes" which include links to Council packet items, resolutions and other official materials pertaining to that item.

The software allows users with a high speed internet connection to view the Council meetings live in real time. All files are stored off site on the vendor's servers with redundancy built-in.

The vendor has a web site at www.granicus.com. The City of Stockton, CA.'s use most closely matches what staff will be recommending for Takoma Park application. Its web site is www.stocktongov.com then click "Watch Channel 97 and City Council Meetings On Your Computer" located in the top center of the page.

On that page, if you click "City Council Meetings", it will take you to a page which lists all the available meetings. You can go directly to the one you are interested in, or type something in the Search box. Try "development". A really long list of previous times this has come up in council meetings is presented; you may click on anyone of them and a separate window will pop up with the video. In the right hand of the Media Player box is the agenda for that meeting. You can scroll down the agenda and select other items you wish to view, and may also click on agenda packet materials and resolutions which are generally in pdf form which will pop-up in another box.

Residents may watch "Channel 97" live and view archived copies of original programming. Staff is also exploring the option to post Snapshots (at a minimum) for viewers.

From the “Open Meetings Compliance Board Manual”

The [Open Meetings] Act requires that the following information be set out in the minutes, whether the meeting is open or closed: “each item” considered, the action taken on each item, and each recorded vote. Section 10-509(c)(1). Although the Act does not specify the level of detail in the description of an “item,” the description should be sufficient so that a member of the public who examines the minutes of an open meeting (or of a closed meeting, if the minutes are later released) can understand what the issue was.